



The red stag that made Rachelle Humble Hedrick number one with a bow.

At the top of her aim

By TARA KINSELL

In less than five years, Rachelle Humble Hedrick, 33, formerly of Greene County, made a name for herself in big-game hunting circles. In fact, three years ago she became a world title holder using a bow and arrow to bag a red stag deer in Leithen Valley, New Zealand.

In one sense, her natural abilities don't come as a surprise. Hedrick, a 1997 Jefferson-Morgan High School graduate, comes from hunting stock. Her father, Danny Humble, was well known by his peers as an outdoorsman. Hedrick's earliest memories of her dad were of him heading out to hunt and fish. But sadly, he was gone before his daughter reached the age where she could join him, passing away of pancreatic cancer when she was 7.

Twenty-one years later, Hedrick would meet, fall in love with and marry someone with that same love of the outdoors – Josh Hedrick. Her husband's family owns and operates Smoke Hole Resort and Caverns in Seneca Rocks, West Virginia.

After meeting her husband, it wouldn't take long for Hedrick to be completely taken with hunting and fishing. She said her newfound hobby makes her think about her dad and wonders why it took so long for the opportunity to follow in his footsteps.

"People still talk about his hunting today. They knew him for his hunting and his baseball," she said. Humble was signed in 1971 to play for the Chicago Cubs minor league club.

She married Josh in 2010. On their "huntingmoon," as they call it, Hedrick

spotted a huge red stag. Taking aim with her bow, she claimed the animal that earned her the title of largest red stag killed by a woman. It also placed her in the number 11 spot overall for taking one with a bow and arrow.

Last spring her record for a woman was beaten. According to Safari Club International (SCI), Hedrick is currently 16th overall for taking a red stag of that size with a bow and arrow.

It was at the SCI Hunters' Convention in Nevada that Hedrick met Eva Shockey, daughter of Jim Shockey who hosts a hunting adventure show on the Outdoor Channel. The girls hit it off, talking about their hunting exploits, but didn't exchange contact information.

"She is probably one of the most famous women hunters in the world. She looked

me up on Facebook and messaged me, asking if I would like to go on a hunt," Hedrick said. "I about passed out. I did 12 cartwheels. It is a pretty big deal."

The hunt took place in October in the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska and it aired in January on Shockey's show. Hedrick said the trip was an amazing one, with a pair of other women who are now great friends. They are currently considering a trip to Hawaii to possibly do another episode for Shockey's show.

"I have been very fortunate. A lot of people go through their whole lives and not see what I have in the last four or five years," she said.

For anyone who might think Hedrick's hunting adventures are filled with hotel stays and being driven to a stocked location, they'd be wrong. She and her husband have spent six days in tents in Mexico on a bull elk hunt and traversed the mountainous terrain of the Yukon Territory.

"It was the absolute hardest hunt I have ever done. I knew it would be hard but words can't even describe how hard it was," she said.

The trip required the couple to purchase special life insurance for the very real possibility that they might not survive the experience. The insurance guaranteed that their remains would be brought out.

"You are afraid the whole time. You could easily die out there. It is not likely but it could happen," she said.

When they arrived in the Yukon, Josh Hedrick was transported one direction by boat and Rachelle in another by plane. It would be just them and a guide. Josh left her with some words of encouragement. "He said, 'Honey, you know this is going to be the hardest thing you have ever done. When you are hanging on the side of that mountain, picture your dad putting his hands on your back pushing you a little farther.'"

Rachelle carried a 100-pound pack on her back as they trekked straight up the mountain.

"It was like having a child piggyback you the whole time as you climbed the mountain. It was seven miles back to camp over the roughest terrain in your life," she said. "We stayed in a two-man

tent that was just big enough to lay in and that was it."

During the climb Hedrick had to dodge the chunks of rock flying at her head, kicked loose by her guide climbing above her. Then she took down a 100-plus pound sheep and had to carry it out.

She trained hard for the trip but, in her own words, "probably not as hard as I should have. It was insane. When I was out there I wished I had walked up the driveway a few more times, did the elliptical a little longer."

Hedrick said she thought, "I'm young, I'm tough, I can do this. No matter how fit you are it is still hard."

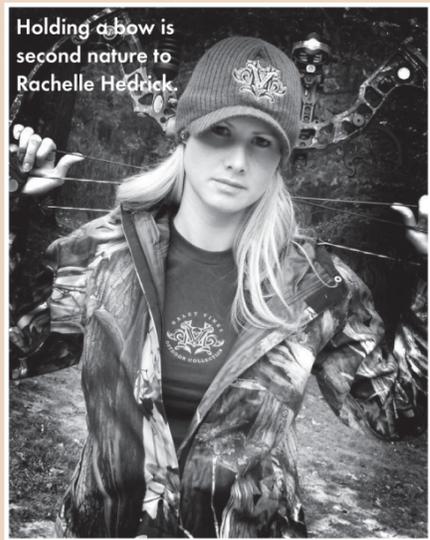
Would she do it again? "Never," she said with conviction. That is one trip crossed off of her bucket list. Africa is another potential destination to be crossed off one day, she said.

"I guess it has been in my blood this whole time and I just didn't know it," she said, still giving the most credit to her husband. "He's taught me everything I know. I wouldn't be doing what I do without him." She good-naturedly notes that she is the better shot with a rifle, but quickly points out that most women are due to a different center of gravity and the steadiness of their aim. When it comes to shooting a bow, she says her husband is dead even with her.

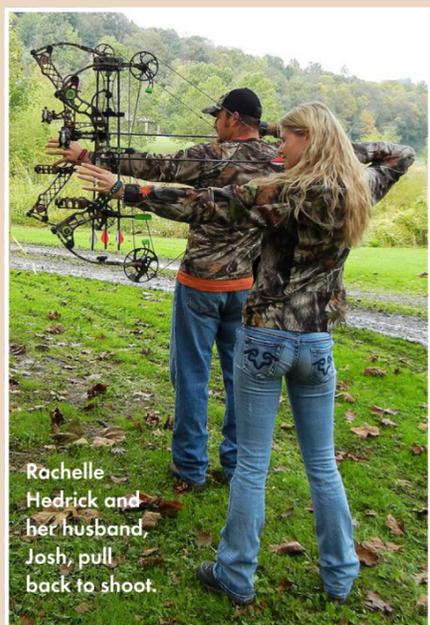
"We were in Alberta, Canada, on my first rifle hunt and I had to sit for 12 hours. I like to hunt by myself, totally silent and still when I hunt," she continued laughing. "Josh is up there in the stand getting his camera out of the bag and making noise."

When Hedrick isn't climbing mountains with her bow and arrows, she runs her own graphic design firm, helps her husband and in-laws with their businesses, and does everything from taxes to raising and fileting trout. "That record stag kind of put us on the map."

When she considers all that she has done in such a short time she offers some advice: "There is so much more to see in this world than you see on a daily basis, so much more," she said. "There are different people, places and things run in different ways. People need to get out a little bit." ■



Holding a bow is second nature to Rachelle Hedrick.



Rachelle Hedrick and her husband, Josh, pull back to shoot.

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